

III. SUMMARY OF INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The 1987 State Parks Act defines the purposes of the state parks system. It establishes that:

The State of North Carolina offers unique archaeologic, geologic, biologic, scenic and recreation resources. These resources are part of the heritage of the people of this State. The heritage of a people should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.

It further provides that:

Park lands are to be used by the people of this State and their visitors in order to promote understanding of and pride in the natural heritage of this State.

One of the best methods of meeting these purposes is through environmental education. The definition of environmental education as set forth in *The North Carolina Environmental Education Plan* is given below.

Environmental Education is an active process that increases awareness, knowledge and skills that result in understanding, commitment, informed decisions and constructive action to ensure stewardship of all interdependent parts of the earth's environment.

The staff of Carolina Beach State Park is committed to using environmental education to encourage park visitors to protect biodiversity. Public understanding and support are critical to the park staff's efforts to preserve representative examples of biodiversity within the park and throughout the coastal area. Each year, the staff offers a series of environmental education workshops that provide hands-on teaching tools in environmental awareness and protection. The Carolina Beach Environmental Education Learning Experience (EELE) was the first environmental education curriculum guide produced by the division and has been widely distributed in schools and environmental education centers throughout the state.

Carolina Beach State Park has two primary themes and ten secondary themes. In priority order, the primary themes are biodiversity and carnivorous plants.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

BIODIVERSITY

With at least 13 different natural community types within a small area, Carolina Beach State Park serves as an excellent example of biodiversity in our state park system. Programs and exhibits in this theme area explain what biodiversity is, why it is important and how society can preserve it. Important concepts within this theme are natural community, plant adaptations and the geologic history that has created environments fostering biodiversity. Park management methods to maintain biodiversity, such as prescribed burning and control of non-native plants,

are also highlighted.

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

The park's EELE, *Plants That Bite Back*, provides 13 activities that introduce carnivorous plants and their protection to students in the elementary and middle grades. The park itself hosts five different types of carnivorous plants: Venus' flytrap, sundew, bladderwort, butterwort and pitcher plants. Venus' flytraps are endemic to an area within 75 miles of Wilmington, North Carolina. Exhibits and programs in this theme explore the different methods used by carnivorous plants to lure, trap and digest small animals. In describing habitat needs and management methods, the park staff hopes to inspire students and park visitors to enjoy and protect these rare and unusual plants.

SECONDARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Secondary themes for the park support and supplement the primary themes, and are listed below.

1. Fishing: how to catch and identify some of the Cape Fear River's many fishes.
2. Crabbing: natural history of the blue crab and how to catch, cook and eat them.
3. Fire It Up: prescribed burning, its results and importance in maintaining the park.
4. Backyard Birding: native birds and how to attract them to your backyard.
5. Sugarloaf: the natural landmark and its significance to the area's cultural history.
6. Poisonous Plants and Animals
7. Reading Animal Signs
8. River Walk
9. What Does a Park Ranger Do?
10. Reptiles and Amphibians

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